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16 -

III. European Force

10. Prospect. An alternative means of proceeding would be to try to move soon on the multilateral ship-based MRBM force which we are now discussing in NATO.

(a) Acceptance. The Germans, Italians, Belgians, and Turks are favorable to such a force. So are the Canadians. It is quite possible that we could get a fairly early decision from these countries to go ahead with such a force, if the US posture became one of positive leadership.

(b) US Involvement. To get such quick action, the US would have to participate initially. There might be an understanding that the European countries could buy us out later, if it was then desired to convert the force into a European force.

(c) Control. The initial participants would not have to solve the problem of how the force was to be controlled in order to get the initial decision to set up the force;

(d) Financing. The German, Italian, US, and other financial contributions would probably be sufficient to meet initial costs of a modest force, e.g., 10 ships and 80 missiles (as contrasted with the 25 ship-200 missile force we have been discussing in NATO).

(e) UK and France. Once it was clear that the force was actually being created, the UK might participate and make a contribution. Laloy has indicated that French participation at least on a token basis, should not be excluded if we did not insist - as we would not - on France's abandoning its national program.

11. Timing. The force could probably be set up at least as soon as a French force.

Reason:

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Reason: The initial participants named above would be satisfied with merchant ships, instead of holding out for Polaris submarines (which take longer to build), as the French would. Training of mixed crews could begin as soon as the decision to go ahead was made, and could be completed well within the 26 month period required to produce A-2 missiles.

12. Political Impact. The course would be more welcome to most of the European countries than bilateral aid to France.

It would give these countries, and particularly the Germans, the feeling that they now had a prospective nuclear force of their own with which to counter more aggressive Soviet nuclear blackmail efforts, e.g., over Berlin.

It would give the Italians and Turks a prospective substitute for their land-based MRBM's if some general deal for removal of land-based IRBM's around the US and Soviet peripheries should be one outcome of the Cuban crisis.

More importantly, US leadership now in developing such a multilateral force would make clear to our allies that the Cuban crisis - far from diverting us from our basic policies in Europe - had intensified our desire to prosecute those policies. It would thus reinforce allied confidence in our leadership at the very time that confidence will be most needed.